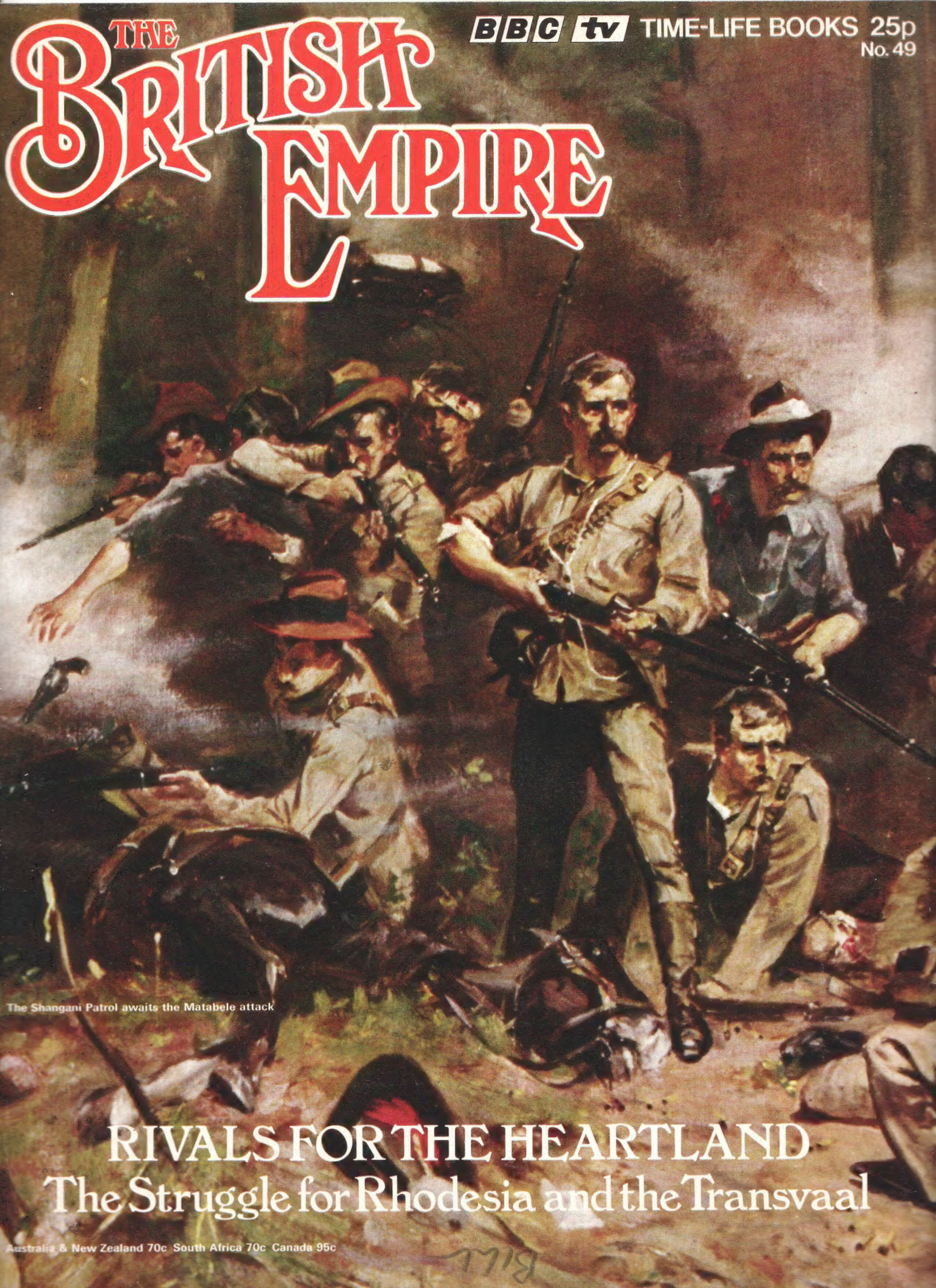
# THE BRITISH EMPIRE

BBC tv TIME-LIFE BOOKS 25p
No. 49



The Shangani Patrol awaits the Matabele attack

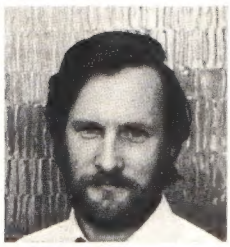
## RIVALS FOR THE HEARTLAND
## The Struggle for Rhodesia and the Transvaal

Australia & New Zealand 70c South Africa 70c Canada 95c

# THE BRITISH EMPIRE

BBC tv TIME-LIFE BOOKS 25p
No. 49

**Editor** Harold C. Field
**Deputy Editor** John Man
**Picture Editor** Jean I. Tennant
**Design Consultant** Louis Klein
**Staff Writers** Stephen Webbe, Simon Rigge, Susan Hillaby
**Picture Researchers** Marian Berman, Pamela Marke
**Art Director** Robert Hook
**Assistant Art Director** Graham Davis
**Art Assistant** Bridget Allan
**Editorial Assistant** Anne Morgan
**Staff Photographer** Eileen Tweedy
**Partwork Director** Kurt Medina
**Sales Director** George Gillespie
**Consultants** D.K. Fieldhouse, Lecturer in Commonwealth History and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford
A.F. Madden, Reader in Commonwealth Government and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford



**JOHN MAN,** editor designate of *The British Empire*, was previously a Reuters correspondent in Germany and deputy editor of the *History of the 20th Century*, for which he wrote articles on the Nuremberg Trials and the Berlin Wall. He contributed an article on the Schlieffen Plan to Purnell's *Readings in 20th Century History*, and a study of the Berlin Blockade is due to be published shortly by Ballantyne Books.

**Subscriptions** – These are available at £6·50 for six months, inclusive of postage and packing. For addresses outside of the United Kingdom, the rate is £8·75, inclusive of surface postage and packing.
**Back Numbers** – These are available at your local newsagent or may be secured by post for the inclusive price of 25p per issue. Be sure and specify which issue(s) you desire.
Orders for both subscriptions and back numbers should be sent, with remittance, to *The British Empire*, BBC Publications, 35 Marylebone High St., London W1M 4AA.
**Binders** – These may be ordered at £1·05 for the Standard edition and £1·75 for the Deluxe edition, either individually or on subscription. Orders, with remittance, should be sent to *British Empire Binders*, BBC Publications, P.O. Box No. 126, London SE1 5JZ.
**NOTE:** All above payments should be by crossed cheque/P.O.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** (*t*=top; *b*=bottom; *l*=left; *r*=right). Cover and pages 1360/1 Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth. Inside back cover: The Parker Gallery, London. Africana Museum, Johannesburg 1350/1, 1363*tr*; Bassano & Vandyk Studios 1345*l*; De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd. 1345*r*; *The Graphic* 1348*t*, 1349*t*, 1358*t*, 1362/3*b*; collection of Mr. Kenneth Griffith 1357, 1358/9b, 1359*t*; The Household Cavalry Museum, Windsor 1355; *Illustrated London News* 1362*bl*, 1362/3*t*, 1367*br*; John Johnson Collection, New Bodleian Library, Oxford 1371; Livingstone Museum, Livingstone, Zambia 1352*t*; The Mansell Collection 1366/7 (except 1367*br*); Radio Times Hulton Picture Library 1348/9*b*, 1353, 1354, 1370; Rhodes Trust, Oxford 1351*r*, 1352*ab*, 1364, 1368; PHOTOGRAPHERS: Dmitri Kessel cover and 1360/1, 1352*t*, 1372; Roynon Raikes 1351*r*, 1352*b*; Geo. Spearman 1355; Eileen Tweedy 1348*t*, 1349*t*, 1358*t*, 1362*bl*, 1362/3, 1366/7. MAP: David Nash 1347. ARTIST: Charles C. Stadden inside back cover.

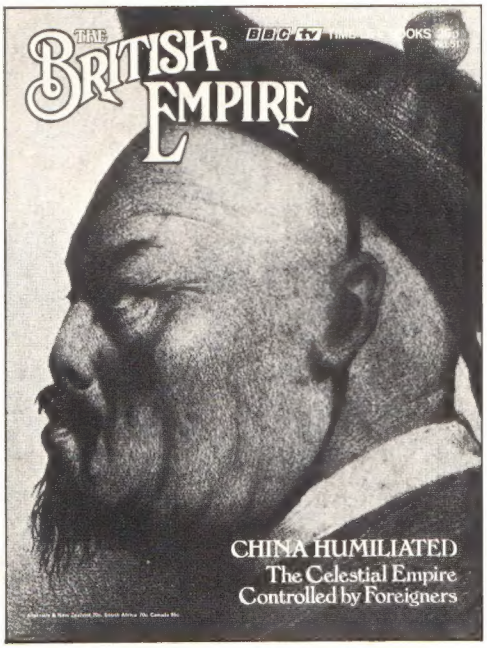
© 1972. Time-Life International (Nederland) B.V.

Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

Published by Time-Life International (Nederland) B.V. in co-operation with the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Distributed in the U.K. by Time-Life International Ltd. and BBC Publications.

Printed in England by Jarrold and Sons Ltd. Norwich.




## CONTENTS

**1345. Rivals for the Heartland**
Cecil Rhodes's ambitious dreams meet opposition from Kruger of the Transvaal and the fighting Matabele warriors.

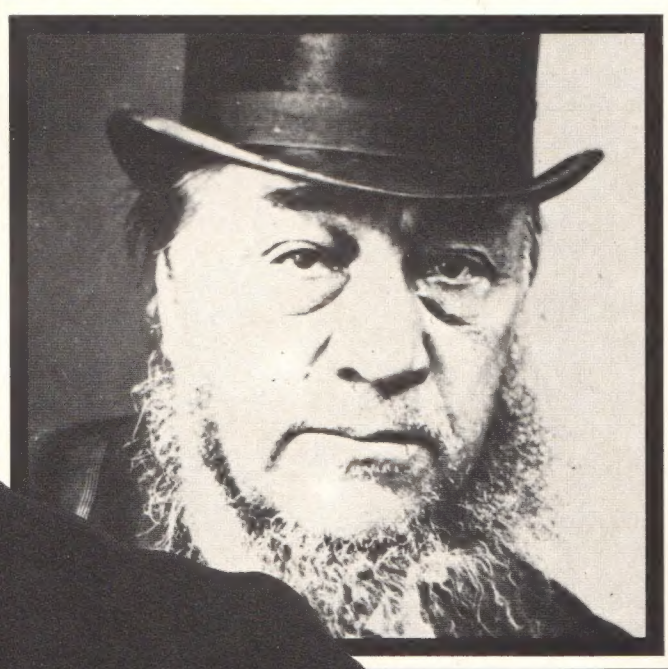
**1357. Picture Essay: The Making of Rhodesia**
The Pioneer Column treks into Matabeleland with surprising ease, but then has to fight to preserve Rhodes's new colony.

**1364. Jameson's Raid**
Rhodes's ambitious attempt to take over the Transvaal by fomenting rebellion in Johannesburg comes to naught when Jameson's raid is smashed.

**Cover:** The men of Allan Wilson's doomed Shangani Patrol stand firm in the face of fierce Matabele fire. The heroism with which the British met death has become part of Rhodesian folklore.

# RIVALS FOR THE HEARTLAND

**Between 1880 and 1900, two men – Cecil Rhodes (left) and Paul Kruger (below) – clashed in a struggle to control the fate of southern Africa. They were utterly at odds: Rhodes sought Empire northwards from the Cape to fulfil a single-minded passion for power and wealth. Kruger, leader of the Transvaal – the Boer nation that blocked Rhodes's ambitions – sought to uphold the Fundamentalist, pastoral integrity of his nation. Rhodes's methods were those of scurrilous power politics. Kruger answered with wily diplomacy, backed by his country's gold-mines. Their rivalry laid the foundations of present-day Rhodesia, Zambia and South Africa.**



by John Man

To many British officials in the 1880s, Paul Kruger, President of the Transvaal, was nothing more than a repulsive anachronism, destined like his Boer nation for rapid extinction within the bounds of Britain's expanding South African Empire.

Repulsive, perhaps: a wispy beard fanned like seaweed round his coarse, saurian features, and when he spoke in his gruff, jerky voice, spittle played round his lips. Anachronistic, no doubt: Kruger, in accordance with his strict Calvinist faith, was still convinced that the earth was the centre of the universe, and he headed a tribe of Fundamentalist patriarchs, fiercely determined to preserve their pastoral ways against the contamination of Western civilization.

But far from leading his people to extinction, he was a shrewd politician, superbly equipped by his background to ensure the Boers' survival in the struggle against subversive foreign influences. At the age of ten, he had marched in the Great Trek of the 1830s, travelling away from the British-dominated Cape, to the land beyond the Vaal River – the Transvaal – where he had grown up with the new Boer nation. In 1877 the British had taken over the Transvaal, and by the time the Boers seized their independence again in 1881, he had proved an incisive leader. Two years later, he became President.

The next 17 years – the term of Kruger's Presidency – far from seeing the collapse of this "peasant" nation, was to mark the Transvaal's steady advance towards the domination of southern Africa. For by one of history's greater ironies, this nation of farmers had grown up over the greatest source of gold the world had ever seen. This was to be the key to power in the area, and it was this that would enable Kruger to uphold his country, through two decades of increasing bitterness, against a double-edged British challenge of encirclement and intrigue. His success was to prove a growing threat to imperial authority: when the Boer War broke out in 1899, it seemed to many British both inevitable and necessary.

For all its later success, Kruger's Presidency began in a low key. The Transvaal was economically and politically weak. It was an impoverished nation – its annual revenue was under £100,000 – and, by the Convention of Pretoria that guaranteed independence after 1881, was still subject to British "suzerainty," and thus in theory to British intervention.

Still, the Boers, having won their independence by force of arms, had seen that forceful action could bring results. Self-confident and determined to secure and extend that newly won freedom, Boer officials sought links with Holland and, more significantly, with Germany, which was newly involved in the business of African colonization. Kruger himself visited Europe, and chatted with Bismarck, the German Chancellor. And Boer farmers, continuing the established traditions of the Trekkers, moved west from the Transvaal towards the Kalahari Desert in search of new farmland. There, two tiny states, with the euphonious titles of Stellaland and Goschen, sprang into short-lived existence.

Then far to the west, on the coast, the Germans set up a tiny enclave, the germ of the future German South-West Africa. At once a cry of distress arose from the British in the Cape. What if Boer and German should link? The route to the African interior – unofficially regarded as British since David Livingstone's explorations there 35 years before – would be closed and the African interior effectively turned into an anti-British preserve.

In London, government officials, wary of further conflict with the hard-fighting Boers, invited Kruger to London to arrange a new settlement: they persuaded him to abandon the two new Boer republics and not to make treaties with foreign powers. In return they promised not to interfere in the Transvaal's internal affairs and dropped the claim to suzerainty. For the moment, Empire in South Africa was, it seemed, safe.

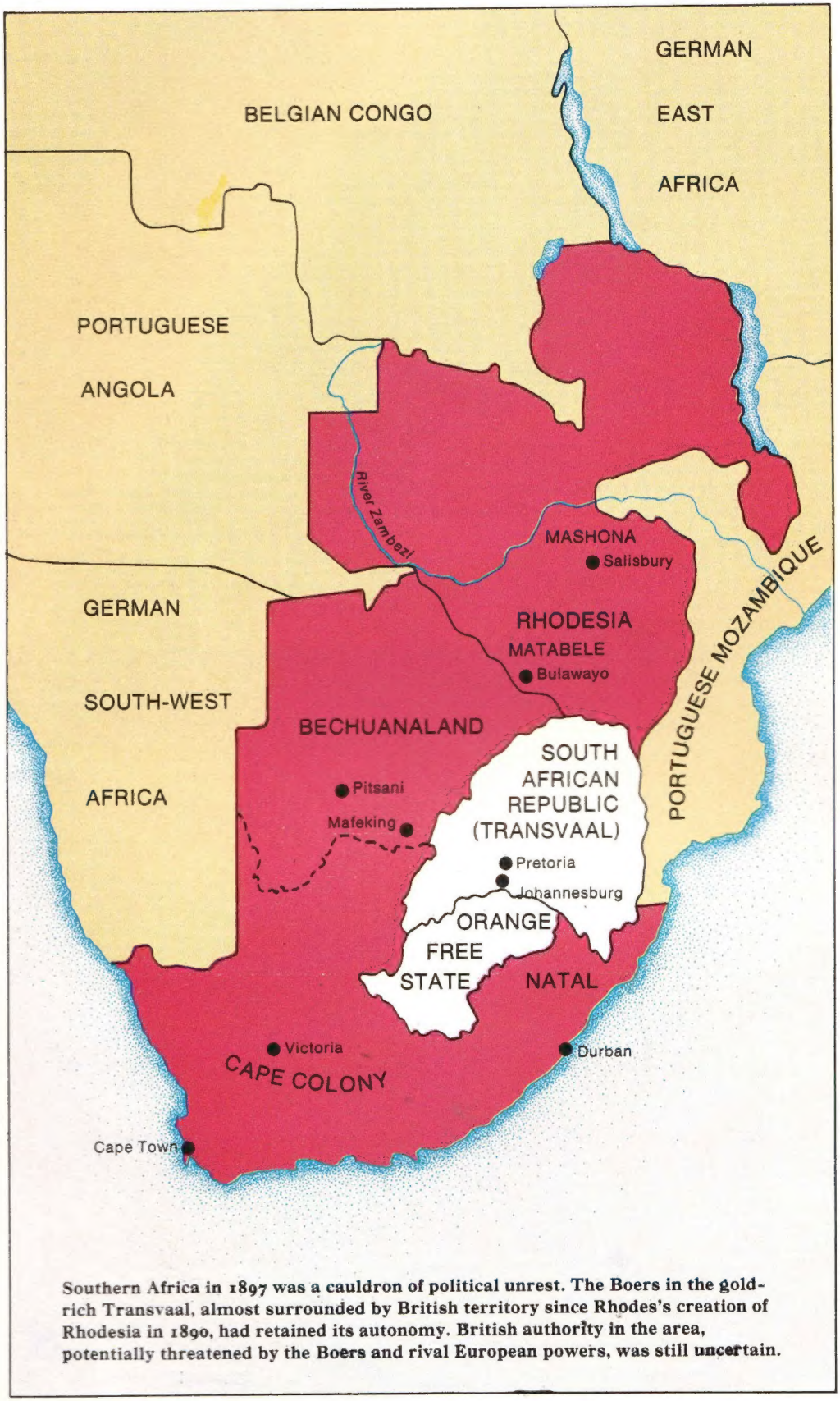
While the Transvaal remained poverty-stricken, Britain's interests might indeed be secure. But the discovery of gold in 1886 changed all that. A landlocked backwater was about to acquire the keys to power over all southern Africa.

Gold had first been discovered in the Transvaal back in the 1850s, some 30 miles south of Pretoria – not in vast amounts, but enough to keep hopeful diggers, many of them English, criss-crossing the area in search of a big find. It was a forbidding part of the country: a line of high ridges rising up to 6,500 feet above sea-level, sparsely populated by Boer farmers living in brick-built, mud-floored houses. This treeless veld, where the wind whipped the biting dust into irritating clouds that clogged nose, eyes and mouth, was known as the Witwatersrand, the "Edge of White Water," after the clear sparkling streams that tumbled down its northern side. To most people it was simply the Rand.

Who actually discovered the gold-reef is still a matter of dispute. There were at least two people involved, George Walker and George Harrison. These two, emerging briefly into the historical limelight only to vanish at once into the shadows, had worked together odd-jobbing for Boer farmers and prospecting when they could. One day in February, 1886 – so runs the most widely accepted version of the story – George Walker idly broke off a piece of rock while on a stroll to see his friend. When he arrived he crushed the rock with a ploughshare and panned the dust in a borrowed saucepan. There for all to see was a tell-tale streak of gold. The two of them rapidly agreed on prospecting rights with the farmer, Gerhardus Osterhuizen, and by June it was clear that the find was a remarkably big one.

Within a few days, all the Transvaal knew of the strike. Prospectors rapidly discovered further outcrops: the gold-reef extended at least 30 miles. Within a month the government proclaimed the whole area a "public digging," and ordered a site to be chosen for a village. The three officials who were given the job were all named Johann or Johannes, and by mutual agreement they named the patch of land they selected Johannesburg. When consulted, Kruger agreed with the choice, pointing out that one of his own names was Johannes too. Johannesburg, the wealthiest gold-rush town of all time, was born.

All that summer of 1886 ships from Britain, the Continent, Canada, the




**Southern Africa in 1897 was a cauldron of political unrest. The Boers in the gold-rich Transvaal, almost surrounded by British territory since Rhodes's creation of Rhodesia in 1890, had retained its autonomy. British authority in the area, potentially threatened by the Boers and rival European powers, was still uncertain.**

United States, Australia and New Zealand arrived at the Cape's ports, crammed with fortune-hungry diggers. On the east coast, business in mules, horses, ox-wagons and coaches boomed as locals cashed in on the demand for transport over the 350-mile journey inland. Fourteen-mule stage-coaches rattled north and west for three days and nights, changing teams every ten or 15 miles, the passengers on top firmly strapped in their seats to stop them being thrown off in their sleep.

Within weeks, Johannesburg was a burgeoning township of tents and flimsy wooden buildings set in rough lines on the veld, while a stone's throw away, ill-equipped miners hacked trenches into the rocky soil.

They soon found that the gold was not to be easily won. There were no nuggets: the metal was locked into the rock in tiny particles. To get at it at all, the rock had to be laboriously crushed, then washed and sieved. But from the first there were those with money enough to set up massive rock-crushers and apply a system of chemical reactions based on mercury to separate the gold from the rock-dust.

Even this was an inefficient process: the vast piles of waste that grew round the mining areas contained millions of pounds worth of gold, but as yet no one knew how to get at it.

The trouble and expense of such large-scale operations turned Johannesburg into a theatre for big-time impresarios acting from behind the scenes in Kimberley, Cape Town, London, New York, Paris, Berlin: places where financiers who had seen the miracle of the Kimberley diamond-rush in 1870 could establish syndicates to tap the treasures of the "New El Dorado." Among them was Cecil Rhodes, soon to be the sole owner of the Kimberley diamond-mine.

Johannesburg's growth was phenomenal. In 1889, only three years after its foundation, its white population stood at 40,000 – four times the size of the Transvaal's capital at Pretoria. Most men were earning good wages, thousands had enough to invest something in Johannesburg's 450 firms, whose nominal capital of £11,000,000 was a hundred times more than the Transvaal's total income only five years before. The Stock Exchange, a

continued on p. 1350

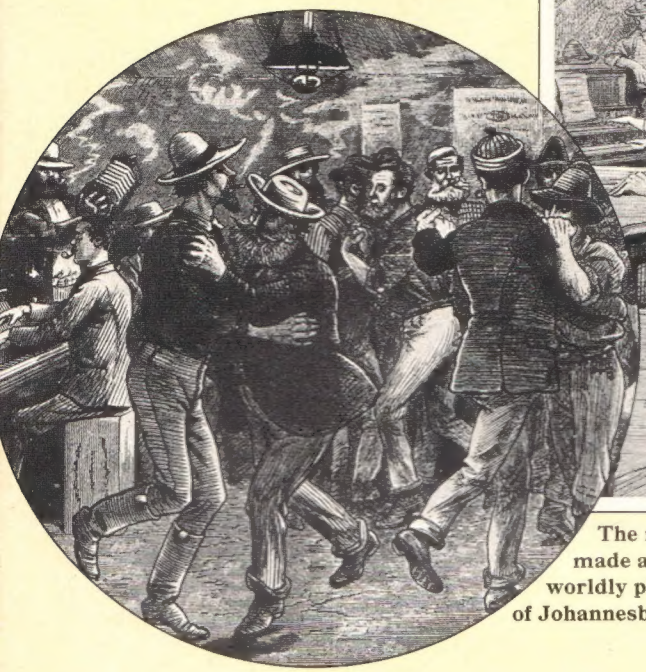
Trapped by a flooding stream, passengers on their way to the gold-fields – in one of the hundreds of American-made coaches on the route – prepare to lend a hand.

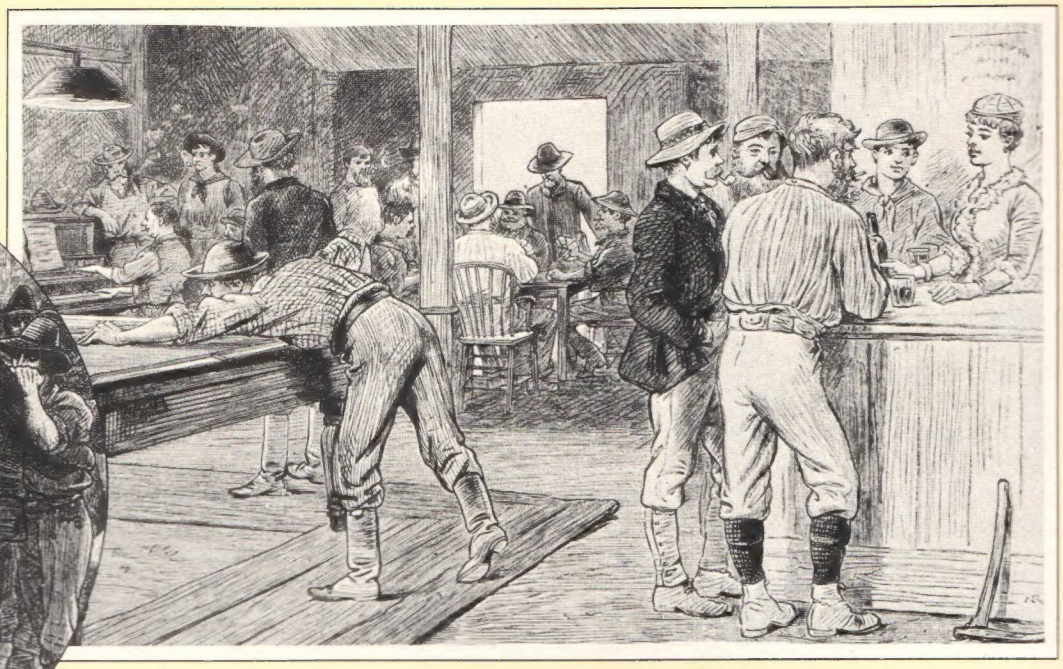
# AFRICA'S EL DORADO

With the discovery of gold at Johannesburg in 1886, fortune-hunters scrambled for places aboard the ox-wagons and Wild West-style stage-coaches that rattled inland daily to the gold-fields. No one expected to stay long – other Transvaal finds, like that at Barberton, had given out all too rapidly – and early Johannesburg looked like a temporary collection of iron and wooden huts, with as many bars, hotels and brothels as shanties. The hard-drinking Johannesburgers, according to a Cape politician, John X. Merriman, made up "a society which would corrupt an archangel." Within a year, fully fledged mines had blossomed outside a fast-growing town – and the Boers were levelling increasingly bitter gibes at the *aasvoel* (vultures) tearing at the heart of the Boer nation.

The first prospectors at Johannesburg begin to criss-cross the gold-bearing ground with trenches in an attempt to trace the course of the undulating "reef" of gold.

Billiards at "Cockney Liz's" bar was practically the only entertainment to be had at Barberton, one of Transvaal's many short-lived boom-towns that were created to serve the hectic searchers for gold.





The rough-and-ready revels at Barberton made a striking contrast to the more worldly pleasures offered by the bar-girls of Johannesburg's many establishments.

single-storey building, rapidly became so inadequate for the amount of business that brokers had to shout their business outside in the streets in a fenced-off area known as "Between the Chains."

Even an abrupt slump in 1890 was only the calm before another storm of investment. In that year, diggers struck iron pyrites, "fool's gold," with such a high iron content that the old mercury-based system of extraction could no longer be applied. Johannesburgers prepared to pull out by the hundred, believing the rush was over. They were wrong. A year later a self-taught Glasgow chemist named John MacArthur arrived with a new, superbly effective chemical system that used a complex set of cyanide and zinc reactions to overcome the problems posed by the pyrites. With this, those who could afford the process set to work not only on newly crushed rock, but on the thousands of tons of easily accessible waste piled on the veld.

The hectic scramble for wealth was on again, but although most of Johannesburg's inhabitants had a good share of it, the mood of the town was increasingly tinged with bitterness towards what they saw as the duplicity and inefficiency of the Boer government.

Their first complaint was over monopolies that drove up the price of certain vital supplies. To save the trouble of direct administration, the Boers had sold concessions that gave firms monopoly rights for the supply of essentials like water, electricity, gas, spirits – there were 217 saloons – and dynamite.

Politically, too, the foreigners – or *uitlanders* as the Boers called them, a derogatory term that had the sense of "barbarian" – felt themselves badly used. After the Boers received their independence in 1881, no *uitlander* could have the vote until he had completed five years of residence. Then in 1890, Kruger, well aware that a large, wealthy non-Boer population might one day undermine the Boer way of life, raised the voting requirements to 14 years' residence and a minimum voting age of 40. He thus constitutionally guaranteed that almost half the population would be deprived of any significant political control of the country's affairs for years to come.

Beyond the Transvaal's borders, however, he was all but powerless. He soon found himself facing an external threat almost as serious as that posed by the *uitlanders* within: the British began to surround him.

After the Boer retreat from Stellaland and Goschen, the British, unwilling to risk a link between Boers and German South-West Africa, annexed Bechuanaland (present-day Botswana), a vast area of grassland, savannah and desert.

There now remained just one area to the north, the land of the Matabele tribe, as yet largely untouched by Europeans. This was the setting for the next scene in the struggle for dominion over the southern African heartland.

In the 1880s, this region was already the focus of attention for many who dreamed of trans-African empire: for the Germans, who saw it as a possible link between their colonies in South-West and East Africa: for the Portuguese, who might have used it to join Angola to Mozambique; for the Boers, now able to expand only in that direction; and for Cecil Rhodes, with his epic dream of a railway – a highway for economic domination – running on British territory all the way from the Cape to Cairo, 4,000 miles away.

Only one of these plans had real significance and that was Rhodes's. His imagination was wild with schemes for African Empire: "If there be a God," he said once, "I think that what He would like me to do is paint as much of Africa British red as possible."

His personal appearance made a strange contrast with the magnificence of his dream. He was uncouth, shambling and dozy. His eyes, a watery blue, stared out of a sagging face. His mouth drooped at the corners, giving him a permanently morose expression, and his moustache followed the same line, as though he were made up as as a stage villain. He shook hands limply, with two fingers outstretched, and his voice was surprisingly staccato and squeaky.

The 1880s saw him rise to a position of immense power. He acquired a monopoly over the Kimberley diamond-mines, and built up his multi-million pound Consolidated Gold Fields. Having entered the Cape Parliament in 1881, he rapidly acquired enough influence to be the major inspiration behind London's annexation of Bechuanaland in 1885. And in 1890, with the support of the Cape Afrikaners, who were won over by his dreams of northward expansion, he was to become Prime Minister of the Cape.

It was a meteoric rise, and though to many he seemed coldly dedicated to the acquisition of power for its own sake – to the exclusion of deep friendships – his steam-rolling ambition and grandiose schemes often inspired utter devotion among those who agreed with his ideas.

Throughout his rise to wealth and power, his eyes had been fixed on the land north of the Transvaal, Matabeleland – "my north," as he often called it – the area to which he, as a British subject, now had free access through Bechuanaland. Horrified by the increasing importance of the Transvaal, he hoped that a new colony to the north – one in which, it was rumoured, more gold lay – would create a counterbalance to Kruger's republic.

**In an 1878 sketch by one of the Europeans at the Matabele capital, Bulawayo, the obese chieftain Lobengula reviews his troops –most of them eager for war and impatient of Lobengula's wary leadership.**

Rhodes's plans took on a new urgency when, in 1887, Kruger made two moves that were potentially of enormous strategic significance: he gave permission for a proposed railway line from Delagoa Bay, on the east coast in Portuguese Mozambique, to Johannesburg; and he rejected all schemes for a railway south from the Transvaal to the Cape.

This, Rhodes realized, would eventually undermine the whole basis of British rule in South Africa. It would give Kruger a direct outlet to the sea, would give Germans and Portuguese access to the newly discovered gold-fields and would swing the flow of the Transvaal's exports 90 degrees away from the British south to the Portuguese east. There might never be the north–south trade route that Rhodes sought, only an east–west route. There arose in his mind's eye the possibility of a foreign-dominated barrier north of British South Africa, cutting the Cape off until it was no more than an appendage to the all-powerful Transvaal. No longer would there be a British Empire in South Africa; simply a Boer Empire.

Rhodes planned to counter this threat quite simply: by establishing an indisputable British presence to the north of the Transvaal, in Matabeleland – official if possible, unofficial if need be.

The people on whom Rhodes turned his attention were originally Zulus who had moved into the Transvaal in 1822 when an independent-minded chieftain, Mzilikazi, quarrelled with the Zulu King, Shaka. Driven north of the Limpopo River, out of the Transvaal, by the advancing Boers in 1838, the Matabele rapidly built up their own kingdom in present-day Rhodesia, turning the local population, the ineffective and disunited Mashona, into vassals.

In the 1880s the ruler, Mzilikazi's heir, was Lobengula, a ponderous, impressive, 20-stone giant with a cast in his left eye. "With the exception of the Tsar Alexander," wrote Sir Sydney Shippard, a Commissioner of Bechuanaland, "never have I seen a ruler of men of more imposing appearance." Shippard often saw him strolling slowly among his people: naked save for a thin roll of blue cloth round his waist, his chest thrown out, his head well back, holding a long staff in his right hand. In Shippard's view, "he looked his part to perfection."

Lobengula ruled over a proud nation, which like the Zulus had a standing army of unmarried men for whom warfare and cattle-raiding – mostly at the expense of the unfortunate Mashona – was a way of life.

Since Livingstone's days, there had always been a few missionaries and small-time traders at Lobengula's kraal, Bulawayo. Now, Rhodes himself sent agents there, headed by the lanky Charles Rudd, a partner from earlier diamond-mining days. In 1888, Rudd persuaded Lobengula to accept £100 per month, 1,000 breech-loading rifles and an armed

**"Old Buster," as Europeans cheerily nicknamed Lobengula, poses wanly with one of his wives – his favourite one, according to the photographer who took the shot.**

gunboat on the Zambezi – never supplied, since the Zambezi was not navigable so far inland – in exchange for all the mining rights in Matabeleland and for permission to undertake "all things necessary to win and procure the same."

Despite this success, back in Whitehall no one seemed interested in Rhodes's Cape-to-Cairo vision. The Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, was unmoved by such dramatic schemes: he did nothing more than declare Matabeleland a British "sphere of influence." If there were no immediate fears of another country occupying Matabeleland, ran Salisbury's reasoning, why risk antagonizing anyone – especially the Boers – and why should the British risk possible large-scale expenses in occupation? The Colonial Secretary, Lord Knutsford, was likewise of little use to Rhodes: he was so cautious and ineffectual that he was known derisively as "Peter Woggy."

But official caution brought its own problems: though there seemed no immediate need to take over Matabeleland, there was a long-term strategic threat posed by the rise of Kruger's republic. If it really did become the pre-eminent power in South Africa, and if there was a war, and if the Suez Canal was closed or Britain lost control of the Mediterranean, Britain's only remaining route to India – round the Cape – would be in foreign hands. Thus, with no great enthusiasm, did Whitehall see the need to do *something* to preserve British authority in southern Africa.

This horrid dilemma, in which short-term restraint vied with the demands of long-term strategy, acquired a solution of beautiful simplicity when in 1889 Rhodes himself came to London with a suggestion: he would form a company, the British South Africa Company, which – with an official charter – would undertake all the expense and risk of building a railway northwards through Bechuanaland, would negotiate mineral rights with the Matabele and create a new and powerful colony in the area.

Swept along by the public acclaim that welcomed the Colossus on his arrival in London, Knutsford greeted Rhodes's scheme with undisguised relief.

Despite the inevitable protests of

**In a contemporary cartoon, Rhodes dreams of linking Africa from end to end by manipulating "Kaffirs" – a European term both for African natives and for South African mining shares.**

**The Union Jack and lion on the flag of Rhodes's British South Africa Company was visible proof to foreign rivals that Rhodes had official support for his plans to dominate the heart of southern Africa.**

humanitarian organizations like the Aborigine Protection Society, a charter such as Rhodes suggested would have widespread support from investors happy to see imperial firms making a profit while their activities also spread "civilization" – the people whom Rhodes characterized as "philanthropy plus five per cent." Besides, hadn't Rhodes as good as got a charter from Lobengula himself in the form of the Rudd concession?

Rhodes was given his charter in 1889. It ensured that Britain would recognize agreements made with native chiefs over a vast area known as "Zambezia" and defined vaguely as "north of Cape Colony and the Transvaal and west of the Portuguese territories in East Africa" – all in all, some 440,000 square miles, eight times the size of England. The Company was empowered to make laws and to preserve peace with its own police.

In one move, "Cape-to-Cairo" seemed one huge step closer to achievement. In fact, it wasn't. Even as the charter was approved, negotiations were under way to sort out the chaotic border situation in British and German East Africa. In July, 1890, Salisbury, who sniffed at Rhodes's dream as "a curious idea," agreed with Germany that her territories should extend right across to the Congo. The way north was blocked, and would remain so until Germany's defeat in 1918.

But the granting of Rhodes's charter, even if it did not open up the route to the north, was nevertheless an extraordinary way to conduct international politics. Royal charters had been popular in a previous age of imperial expansion, the 16th Century, when Elizabeth I had built up her overseas power by such semi-official piracy. It was a good parallel, as it turned out: Elizabeth had found the relationship with her piratical servants a dangerous one in which they were only too likely to ignore her commands to their own advantage. Exactly the same thing was to happen with the Victorian "privateers" of southern Africa, for Rhodes had no intention of allowing "the imperial factor," as he derisively called the government, to influence him any more than he could possibly help.

Lobengula saw the dangers only too clearly. He and his people wanted British tools and guns, but he was hard pressed to control his warriors, who were eager to raid any Europeans in the area. If he failed to control his people, the white men would start a war of revenge. Even if he did control them, he had seen how, farther south, a few missionaries had led to the coming of a few traders, a few settlers, a few soldiers and finally outright white control. He was trapped, and he knew it. "Did you ever see a chameleon catch a fly?" he asked a missionary in 1889. "England is the chameleon and I am that fly."

Lobengula might well have despaired totally had he known the true character of the man who was to be his principal opponent over the next five years: Dr. Leander Starr Jameson.

Jameson, the youngest of ten brothers, had come out to South Africa for his health, and had met Rhodes while in practice in Kimberley. Inspired by Rhodes's grand designs, he became utterly devoted to his chief. But he was much more than an acolyte. His taut, stocky frame – "like a terrier waiting to pounce," as one of his friends described him – was counterbalanced by his soft brown eyes, by a magnetic warmth that won universal affection and by a bantering self-confidence. The events of the next few years were also to reveal a hidden flair for forthright action when he had decided the moment was right.

In October, 1889, Jameson arrived at Bulawayo as Rhodes's envoy, charged with acquiring Lobengula's permission, within the context of the generalized agreement made with Rudd, for specific mining, settling, administration and peace-keeping operations. Lobengula, though charmed by Jameson's gaiety and frankness, at first tried to reinterpret the agreement made with Rudd, insisting that it applied only to one small area near Bulawayo, that it gave Rhodes only "one hole to dig in." But in January came news of the South Africa Company's charter and a letter from Victoria herself – borne impressively by four sweating, fully uniformed members of the Royal Horse Guards – advising the King "to agree with" the British South Africa Company. This tipped the scales: he gave Jameson permission to prospect for another "hole" to the east in Mashonaland, where, it was thought, there was bound to be gold.

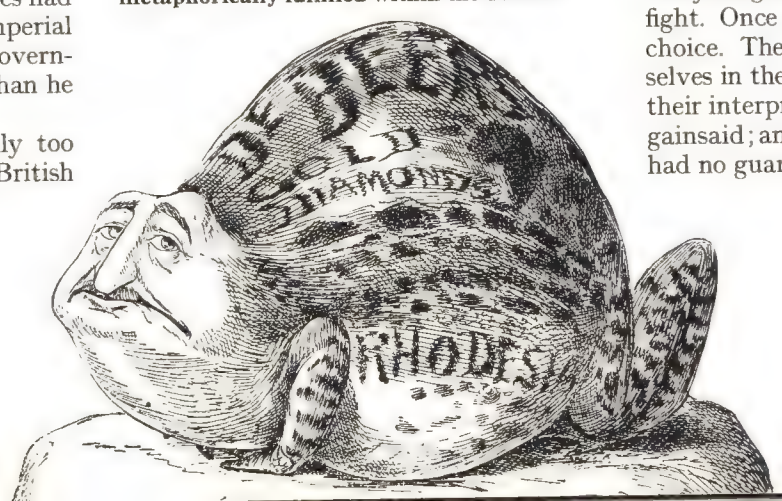
But as this news was passed from Jameson to Rhodes to the High Commissioner in Cape Town to Knutsford in London, simple prospecting rights in a small area among a vassal tribe became something rather more significant: "Lobengula has sanctioned our occupation of Mashonaland." In March, Knutsford unhesitatingly granted permission for an advance of the Company's police into Mashonaland as a peace-keeping force for the expected gold-rush. Thus had Rudd's vague concession of mining rights led in less than two years to an officially backed armed invasion.

In early 1890, the expedition was made ready. Two thousand applied to join it, of whom only 380 were chosen – a hand-picked team, aged between 25 and 30, of many different trades. All were experienced fighters, settlers or travellers in South Africa and were selected irrespective of nationality and class: Boers, British, Americans and Canadians alike.

They knew their mission would be tough and dangerous. "It does not seem within the bounds of common sense," said a member of the expedition, "to suppose that a nation of ferocious savages . . . will allow us quietly to take possession of a country which is virtually theirs by right of conquest without in any way resenting it."

In April, 1890, Jameson went to see his old friend Lobengula to make sure that the young Matabele warriors would not fight. Once again, Lobengula had little choice. The white men believed themselves in the right and would make war if their interpretation of the agreement was gainsaid; and they would make war if they had no guarantee of safe-conduct. Better

**Rhodes, portrayed here as the over-ambitious "Kimberley Frog," is shown so stuffed with profits and land that he must burst – a prophecy that was to be metaphorically fulfilled within the decade.**



to play for time, even at the risk of revolt by his own impis (regiments) later, than fight with Rhodes now.

Jameson's biographer, Ian Colvin, left an account, no doubt romanticized, of this last interview. The King was "stark naked, somewhat agitated . . . moving restlessly up and down within the dim uncertain light of the hut."

"'Well, King,' said Jameson, 'as you will not confirm your promise and grant me the road, I shall bring my white impi and if necessary we shall fight.'

"Lobengula replied: 'I never refused the road to you and your impi.'

"'Very well,' said Jameson, 'then you acknowledge that you have promised to grant me the road. . . . Then as the King remained diplomatically silent, Jameson said: 'Goodbye, Chief, you have given me your promise . . . and I shall bring in my impi.' And he left."

Poor Lobengula, when faced with the showdown, to lose his country by default! He made a last effort to avoid the flickering tongue of the English chameleon with a letter to the Great White Queen herself, the fount of imperial justice. "Your words were, I was to send to you when I was troubled by white men. I am now in trouble." Came the Queen's bland reply: "The Queen assures Lobengula that the British South Africa Company were assembled for a peaceful object, namely the search for gold."

The Pioneer Column advanced into Matabeleland at the end of June, 1890, an army, in their own eyes, bringing civilization and freedom to the poor, oppressed Mashona. The country would be theirs: they knew nothing of Lobengula's condition about digging in just one "hole" and they had each, indeed, been promised 15 gold claims and 3,000 acres of land.

For 400 miles the wagons rolled through the dry heat of the scrubby veld, outriders cutting trees, often rolling them into streams to make bumpy tracks for the cumbersome ox-carts. Patrols guarded front and rear, and at night the wagons laagered in tight circles while a steam-engine puffed away to power a searchlight. There were no attacks, and on September 12, the Union Jack rose over a spot named Salisbury after the Prime Minister.

The local Mashona seemed pleased enough to see the settlers. They were

**Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, sanctioned Rhodes's advance into Matabeleland. Rhodesia's capital was named after Salisbury by a grateful Rhodes.**

happy to have the protection of the white men, both against the Matabele and against the slave-raiding Portuguese in the east, with whom Jameson, now the area's official "Administrator," negotiated a fixed border.

Euphoria on both sides was brief. There were no great gold-finds. The natives, who in return for their protection, were supposed to work and contribute their wages for their own defence, refused to conform to the white men's neat plans.

For a year, there was peace, but life remained grim. Many settlers died of fever, and often former camping-places could be picked out by the little heaps of stone or by small wooden crosses that marked the final resting-place of would-be millionaires. The main centres, Victoria and Salisbury, were nothing more than stockades. Farms and primitive mines, usually worked only by three or four listless Mashona and an overseer, were scattered 15 or 20 miles apart.

Most disastrous of all, the Matabele impis once again began their traditional raids among the Mashona. It was Lobengula's way of ensuring an undiminished sovereignty over his traditional vassals.

Jameson, though still professing friendship for "Loben" as he called him, was determined to establish a clear-cut jurisdiction over the Company's "subjects," as they were known under the terms of the Company's charter. To this end he referred repeatedly to a "border" which he claimed divided his own territory from Lobengula's. Lobengula was incensed: he had only given mining rights, and anyway an admission of such a border would have cost him half his kingdom. "Who gave him the border?" he demanded indignantly. "Let him come forward and show me the man." But Jameson had, in his own eyes, established the precedent he needed to insist that Lobengula's impis be kept out.

The final break came in July, 1893. By then, most of the white men in the threatened area near Victoria had gathered for safety inside the stockaded wooden fort itself, along with a crowd of Mashona servants. They were surrounded by a Matabele impi whose leaders, eager to reassert their authority by slaying a few rebellious Mashona, demanded the surrender of their Mashona "property." The Matabele thoughtfully promised that, in order not to pollute the water-supply, the Mashona vassals would be killed well away from the river.

Jameson, in response to an urgent summons, journeyed by cart the 188 miles from Salisbury – suffering abominably from piles all the way – and arrived at Victoria on July 18. He summoned an *indaba*, a meeting of the Matabele leaders, and told them they had an hour to start for the border. The Matabele, however, did not know what an "hour" was – the interpreter had to point to the sun and then to an area lower down in the western sky as a vague indication – and they may well not have known what the "border" was.

Perhaps it was this uncertainty, perhaps the natural ferocity of the Matabele that led to a decisive incident that occurred soon after the *indaba*. Jameson sent out a patrol led by a Captain Charles Lendy to enforce his order. Three miles from Victoria, Lendy with about 50 men came upon a similar number of Matabele who had disobeyed Jameson's order and gone raiding. Lendy attacked and killed nine and returned to Jameson saying that the natives had fired first. (A later inquiry revealed that Lendy had opened the firing and lied to Jameson.) According to one account, Jameson then turned to

**Cuirassed officers of the Royal Horse Guards – seen here with Rhodes's agents – dazzled Lobengula when they presented him with a letter of support for Rhodes from the Queen. The Chief said he had heard that Victoria's troops were clad in iron, but had not believed it until he saw these men.**

the crowd looking over the stockade and cried: "I hereby declare war on the Matabele!" Jameson, until now a man of persuasion and argument, had become a man of war. It was to prove a turning-point in his life.

With the full support of the settlers, Jameson prepared for action over the next three months. Rhodes supplied £50,000. Horses arrived. White forces, attracted by Jameson's offer of land, gold-claims and cattle after victory was won, gathered at Salisbury, at Victoria and at Tuli, 150 miles south of Victoria. Impis, sent out by Lobengula as a precautionary measure after Lendy's massacre of his people, were reported massing along roads and rivers leading from Bulawayo. The white settlers became convinced – as did the Cape High Commissioner, Sir Henry Loch – that war with Lobengula had now become inevitable.

Loch himself had stronger expansionist ambitions than were popular in Whitehall. He was determined to be in at the kill, and claim the territory at once for the Colonial Office. He therefore increased the force of police on the border between Bechuanaland and Matabeleland to some 500 men with the intention that if it came to a war, imperial troops would afterwards be in a position to hand over Matabeleland to the Empire. On October 5, 1893, there was a brief flurry of shots exchanged with some 30 Matabele across a near-by river. It was enough for Loch. "The impis have got out of hand," he reported to London, "and intend to force a war." He then sent a message to Jameson that made clear who in fact was doing the forcing: "Whatever your plans, they had better now be carried out."

To Lobengula, Loch sent a final message, a backhanded, more-in-sorrow-than in-anger declaration of war: "My friend. your impis are collected in considerable strength. . . . When the present sad time is past, I trust you will have learned to treat your people with kindness."

Lobengula, trapped, knowing himself near defeat, complained pitifully, "I am tired of hearing nothing but lies. . . . What impi of mine have your people seen? . . . I know nothing of them." And those few white traders still lingering at the Bulawayo kraal later confirmed that the Chief indeed showed no wish to fight, even if his young warriors did.

By then, Jameson was already on his way westwards towards Bulawayo with troops from Salisbury and Victoria, while the Tuli force joined the Bechuanaland Border Police and advanced from the south. For Jameson's 700 white troops and 400 Mashonas, the month-long advance, making a steady 10 miles a day, was a victory march.

The Matabele impis over 5,000 strong, attacked just twice, and met with pathetic failure. Though possessing rifles, they had never adapted themselves to modern warfare. Against Jameson's cannon and Maxim machine-guns, the traditional Zulu fighting formation, once the scourge of southern Africa, was useless. The fast-moving "horns" of warriors running out to encircle the enemy from the solid central phalanx, or "chest," never approached their targets. The Maxims, which were the vital factor in the Europeans' military superiority, cut a swath through their tightly packed ranks and the native warriors understood the shell-bursts so little that they fired their rifles at them. They fell by the hundred and finally broke and fled, leaving their commander to hang himself from a tree.

On November 2, 20 miles from Bulawayo, Jameson's column heard a tremendous explosion: Lobengula had blown up his store of ammunition, set fire to his kraal and fled. Two days later, Jameson arrived, finding the whites who had trusted themselves to Lobengula's protection safe. "There is a fence about the word of a King," Lobengula had said once; now, he had proved it true of himself, at least.

Lobengula still had to be caught and the country pacified. Ten days later, a patrol of some 300 whites with 200 native bearers,

four wagons, four Maxims and a cannon, left Bulawayo northwards in pursuit.

The operation seemed strangely doomed from the first. The commander, Captain Patrick Forbes, was supremely confident in the superiority of his force and did not take enough food with him for a long chase. After ten days, his provisions ran out. By the time more arrived from Bulawayo, heavy rains had started. The wagons and the cannon bogged down in mud and Forbes decided to speed up his progress by sending back nearly half his men, with the wagons and two of the Maxims. He pressed on through foul conditions, with his men increasingly critical of his leadership, towards the Shangani River, about 100 miles to the north of Bulawayo.

They were only a few miles behind the fleeing Chief, who, bedevilled by worn-out oxen and dejected followers, decided to surrender. He gave a bag of gold sovereigns worth £1,000 to one of his commanders with orders to go to the British with the message: "Take this and go back. I am conquered." His messengers set off and, either mistaking the position or being afraid to approach, gave the bag and the message to two soldiers straggling behind the main British force. The soldiers hid the gold and said nothing, a fact that only came out some five years later, when rumours arising from the Matabele led to the arrest and imprisonment of the two men concerned. Had they reported Lobengula's last message, Forbes would certainly have negotiated and disaster have been avoided.

As it was, on the night of December 3, Forbes laagered on the bank of the Shangani – without, as was usual practice on a trek, crossing it first. He then dispatched a subordinate, Major Allan Wilson, and a small patrol – but no Maxims – over the river, ordering them to find out which way Lobengula had gone and return to the Shangani by sundown.

Wilson did not return. He disobeyed orders, tracked Lobengula and then sent back a message saying that he had taken up a position near the Matabele camp and asking for Forbes to join him. With a large group of Matabele in the area, it would have been madness to break camp, but Forbes did not want to let an opportunity of an attack slip by and sent up 20 men to join Wilson. Torrential rain promptly flooded the Shangani and Forbes was severed from his advance parties.

The next day Wilson and his newly arrived reinforcements, 35 in all, went out on patrol and ran straight into the Matabele camp. With no Maxims to afford a defence, Wilson just had time to send off two scouts before he and the remaining 32 men were surrounded. They died where they stood.

The story of the Shangani Patrol has become the greatest legend in Rhodesia's early history. In itself, it was a tiny incident. But because for a long time the patrol's fate was uncertain and because theirs were the only valorous deaths in the foundation of the country, the image of Wilson and his men standing shoulder to shoulder against the forces of barbarism has become a symbol in Rhodesia of the white man's spirit.

Forbes, guessing Wilson's fate, made a melancholy retreat to Bulawayo, where Jameson was in full control. Loch's imperial troops, their progress slowed by over-cautious leadership, had arrived too late to wrest control from the Company's hands. Rhodes had his own colony at last, and he even won a tentative promise from London that his Company could take over part of Bechuanaland for his railway north from the Cape to Matabeleland.

In January, 1894, news filtered through that Lobengula had died of fever while still on the run. There was no further opposition, and the subsidiary chiefs surrendered one by one when they heard that Jameson did not intend some dreadful vengeance. The country was renamed Rhodesia. The whites began to re-establish themselves, farming and mining with the Matabele natives as workers.

During the next few years, Rhodesia became something of a backwater, overshadowed by the dramatic events farther south that led up to the Boer War. But the story of Rhodesia's founding was by no means over. The Matabele, as the Mashona had done before them, soon had a long list of grievances. They resented having to settle down and work in peace and it was dangerous, they found, to resist the tough new black police who were used by the Company to "recruit" labour. White administration, though in theory just, turned out to be a sham: the Matabele were treated as little more than a conquered people.

Locusts, drought and rinderpest added to the natives' burdens, and the coming of these scourges seemed too closely connected with the arrival of the white man to be coincidence. Matabele priests prophesied that nothing would come right again until the white man had been driven from the country.

In 1896, the Mashona and Matabele rose in uncoordinated rebellion. There was no outright warfare. At remote mines, at isolated farmsteads, settlers and their families would be found slaughtered. This type of resistance struck the settlers hard, for although only about 250 were killed, they amounted to one-tenth of the white population; in addition, women and children were involved for the first time.

To fight the Matabele and Mashona guerrillas would have demanded a permanent large-scale force, which would have been ruinous to the Company. Rhodes seized the initiative, and in a dramatic and courageous move rode off into the Matopo Hills with just three companions to talk to the Matabele chiefs face to face. After weeks of patient negotiation he persuaded them that the white man's peace would be better than a war that they could never win. In tribute to his success, the Matabele awarded him the honorific title *Lamula 'Mkunzi*, Separator of the Fighting Bulls.

The Mashona, a less unified nation, took longer to quell. Each area had to be pacified separately, a difficult job when the rebels had from childhood learned the skills of concealment from the Matabele impis. By the end of 1897, however, all of Rhodesia was quiet.

It was the end of the pioneering era. Though Rhodesia was never to be another Witwatersrand, it was soon a wealthy enough country for its new settlers. But for the natives, their independence gone, there was little to look forward to. The caption on a photograph of the Matabele chiefs after Rhodes's negotiations with them provides a telling epitaph: "Their faces . . . wear a discarded look. . . . The past is gone and there is no future"

**The Pioneer Column's swashbuckling officers (right) were a mixed lot – frontiersmen, soldiers-of-fortune and aristocrats eager for piracy on the veld.**

# THE MAKING OF RHODESIA

When Cecil Rhodes acquired a Royal Charter in 1889 for his British South Africa Company, an 800-mile stretch of territory – much of it under the sway of the hard-fighting Matabele nation – became his for the taking.

Armed with permission from the Matabele Chief, Lobengula, to search for gold – but in one small area only – Rhodes assembled a team of pioneers and headed north. He planned to acquire enough gold to win domination, not only of Matabeleland, but of all southern Africa.

He succeeded only in part. The Matabele were indeed crushed, despite the now legendary massacre of a Company patrol and a later native rebellion. But there was little gold, and Rhodes's own country – Rhodesia – never achieved the power of his dreams.

# Pioneers with Formidable Arms

Great things were expected of Matabeleland, a huge tribal area as yet unclaimed by European powers. It was supposed to be the site of King Solomon's fabled mines, with so much gold that Johannesburg's mines would pale into insignificance.

The Pioneer Column that was to take over eastern Matabeleland crossed the border into Lobengula's empire on July 10, 1890 – 380 fighting men and settlers in 47 wagons, and 200 South African police, Anxiously awaiting a Matabele assault they laboured for a month through dense, tropical country, hacking through forests disconcertingly ideal for ambushes.

In mid-August, the Column emerged safely on to open veld, and continued on its way without further fear of attack. Indeed, the Matabele knew that an attack on a force so well supplied with cannon and Maxims would be suicidal. Besides, the white men had a device as forbidding as any gun: a searchlight that at night unnerved Matabele scouts by spotlighting them at 400 yards.

On September 12, camp was made near Mount Hampden, in the eastern part of Lobengula's empire and a flag was run up. Fort Salisbury, the capital of present-day Rhodesia was thus founded. This was only a start, however: Rhodes still needed to crush Lobengula before the whole country could fall to him.

The war engineered in 1892 by Rhodes's man-on-the-spot, Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, accomplished this. A well-organized march and two swift battles in which black warriors fell easy prey to rattling Maxims opened Bulawayo, Lobengula's capital, to Company troops.

**One of the deadly Maxim guns, steadied by men holding a rope, begins to ford a stream.**

Wagons in laager formation for the night, like this one, were protected from marauding Matabele warriors by a searchlight that swept the bush.

Pioneers crowd round Lobengula's envoys, who delivered a letter protesting that the settlers were "raiding the King's country."

This camp at Fort Salisbury, site of the capital of present-day Rhodesia, was established with the vague, official-sounding proclamation that the area was "under Her Majesty's protection."

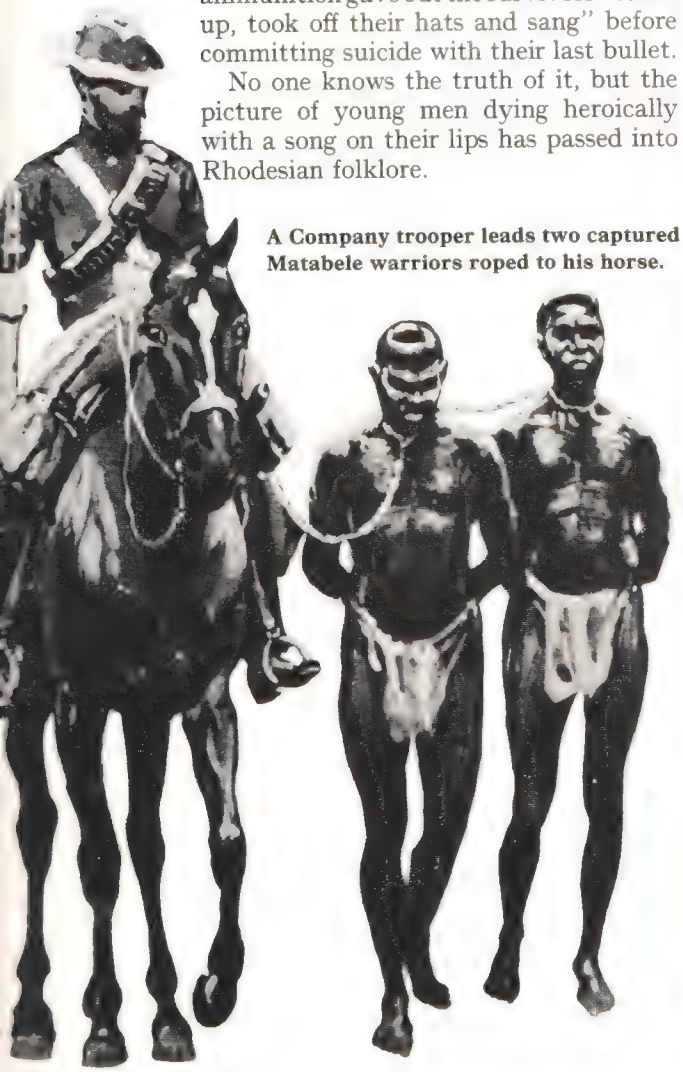
# Last Stand on the Shangani

After the defeat of Lobengula's Matabele in November, 1893, a force of Jameson's men set out to capture the fleeing Chief. Their story has become the most famous in Rhodesia's early history.

When the patrol neared Lobengula's camp on the Shangani River on December 3, a detachment commanded by Major Allan Wilson went across the river to reconnoitre. Wilson stumbled by chance on the Matabele camp and was soon surrounded. Retreating into a clearing early the next morning, he and his 32 men prepared for what they knew was to be their final battle. Out of the bushes came the dry rattle of wooden spears on ox-hide shields – a traditional prelude to attack – followed by the first shots.

It must have taken about four hours before all the men were dead. The details were never known, but a Matabele warrior later reported that as their ammunition gave out the survivors "stood up, took off their hats and sang" before committing suicide with their last bullet.

No one knows the truth of it, but the picture of young men dying heroically with a song on their lips has passed into Rhodesian folklore.



**A Company trooper leads two captured Matabele warriors roped to his horse.**

**The men of the doomed Shangani Patrol face imminent death in one of the many paintings that commemorate the action.**

# Rhodes Makes Peace

Soon after the massacre of the Shangani Patrol, Lobengula, still on the run, died of smallpox. An area the size of France had fallen to Rhodes's Chartered Company, but the task of administering its prize – soon renamed Rhodesia – was not to be an easy one.

The natives grew resentful under white rule: they were herded into two 3,500 square mile reserves, saw their cattle seized on the basis of laws that took little account of local custom, and were forced to work by tough Zulu police.

White men, believing the Matabele spirit broken, flooded in: by 1895, 200 companies had staked out 45,000 gold-claims. On top of this, drought and locusts struck; rinderpest, the dread cattle disease, forced settlers to slaughter thousands of the Matabele's afflicted beasts.

In 1896, the Matabele were told by one of their priests that "These white men . . . killed your father, sent the locusts, and the disease among the cattle and bewitched the clouds. Now go and kill!"

Eager to revive their warlike traditions the Matabele turned on the whites in March, 1896, and, in a series of raids, slew 130 of them. Those Europeans who could rushed into the few towns and fortified them. Reinforcements hurrying north the 600 miles from Mafeking were of no real assistance; on their arrival, rebellion spread to another tribe, the Mashonas. But the increased numbers of fighting men in the forts brought about a deadlock in the war. The man who broke it was Rhodes himself, who rode unarmed into the Matopo Hills to parley with the natives in the labyrinthine granite caves that had given the Matabele an almost impregnable base.

During two months of careful negotiations, Rhodes won the trust of the natives. The Matabele leaders finally made peace in return for official recognition of their positions of authority over their tribes.

The Mashona tribes, however, turned to guerrilla warfare, using antiquated flintlocks that fired anything – even lengths of telegraph line. Lacking a central leadership, the Mashonas had to be crushed tribe by tribe, a campaign that was not finished until the end of 1897.

**Company troops relieve a besieged store 50 miles east of Bulawayo in Insiza, where the Matabele rebellion broke out in March, 1896.**

**On a moonlit night at Bulawayo, well fortified within a week of the outbreak of the Matabele revolt, men ready for action snatch what rest they can in a line of open wagons.**

Captured Matabele spies lie dead after their execution. Native troops, brought up from Bechuanaland to assist the whites, look on.

Scouts protect a supply coach as it makes its way across country to Salisbury. In the background, natives keep pace, awaiting an opportunity to strike at the white men.

# II. Jameson's Raid

By the time of the 1896 rebellion in Rhodesia, Rhodes was spent as a political force, ruined the previous year by his own lieutenant, Jameson, who at the end of 1895 invaded the Transvaal. It was a private act of war, easily crushed by the Boers, but its repercussions reverberated across continents and down the years. It not only ruined Rhodes; it destroyed the last hopes of Boer-British harmony and revealed the latent antagonism between Germany and England, a major factor in the events that led up to the outbreak of the First World War.

The main responsibility for the raid lay with Rhodes himself. In the four years after becoming Prime Minister of the Cape in 1890, he saw more and more clearly that if he wanted the Transvaal to fall, he would have to engineer it himself. And time for him was short: he was suffering from a weak heart and knew he had not long to fulfill his ambitions.

He was aware that in Johannesburg the *uitlanders*, led by the National Union party, objected more and more strongly to the limitations on their rights by the Boers. It seemed unreasonable and grotesque that they, constituting about half the Transvaal's population and largely responsible for its wealth, should be subjected to Boer discrimination.

With this in mind, Rhodes planned more direct action against the Transvaal: a coup, to be sprung by the anti-Boer *uitlanders*, whose revolt would be supported from without by Rhodes's own men and clinched by the arrival from the Cape of the British High Commissioner to declare the Transvaal British. With a friendly government in power and no trade restrictions, all South Africa would, he thought, rapidly become the English-speaking federation of which he dreamed.

The idea was not his alone: it arose among several *uitlanders*, including Rhodes's representatives in Johannesburg (his brother, Frank, and an American, John Hays Hammond), Jameson's brother, Sam, and the Chairman of the *uitlanders'* National Union, Charles Leonard.

A similar plan was in fact suggested to the Liberal government in London in 1894 by the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Loch, who was impressed with the strength of *uitlander* feeling. The Liberals rejected the plan as far too provocative, and Sir Henry was retired in 1895.

But that year, the situation in London changed dramatically. Under a new Conservative government, the Colonial Office acquired a vigorous leader: Joseph "Pushful Joe" Chamberlain. His background was extraordinary for a Conservative: as the owner of a screw-factory, he had actually made his name as a radical Liberal, driving through social reforms in his native Birmingham. Now, having quarrelled with the Liberals and crossed the floor of the House, the sleek, monocled Colonial Secretary applied himself to imperial matters.

Suddenly, too, as Rhodes discovered, there were others eager to see the Empire expanded. To the Press and the public, the idea of Empire had suddenly become a source of glamour and an emotional prop as Britain's power was challenged by Germany, France and America. And for one paper, *The Times*, "Empire" was more than an article of faith: it was a call to action. Its colonial expert was the influential Flora Shaw, a remarkable woman later to become wife of Lord Lugard, Administrator of Nigeria.

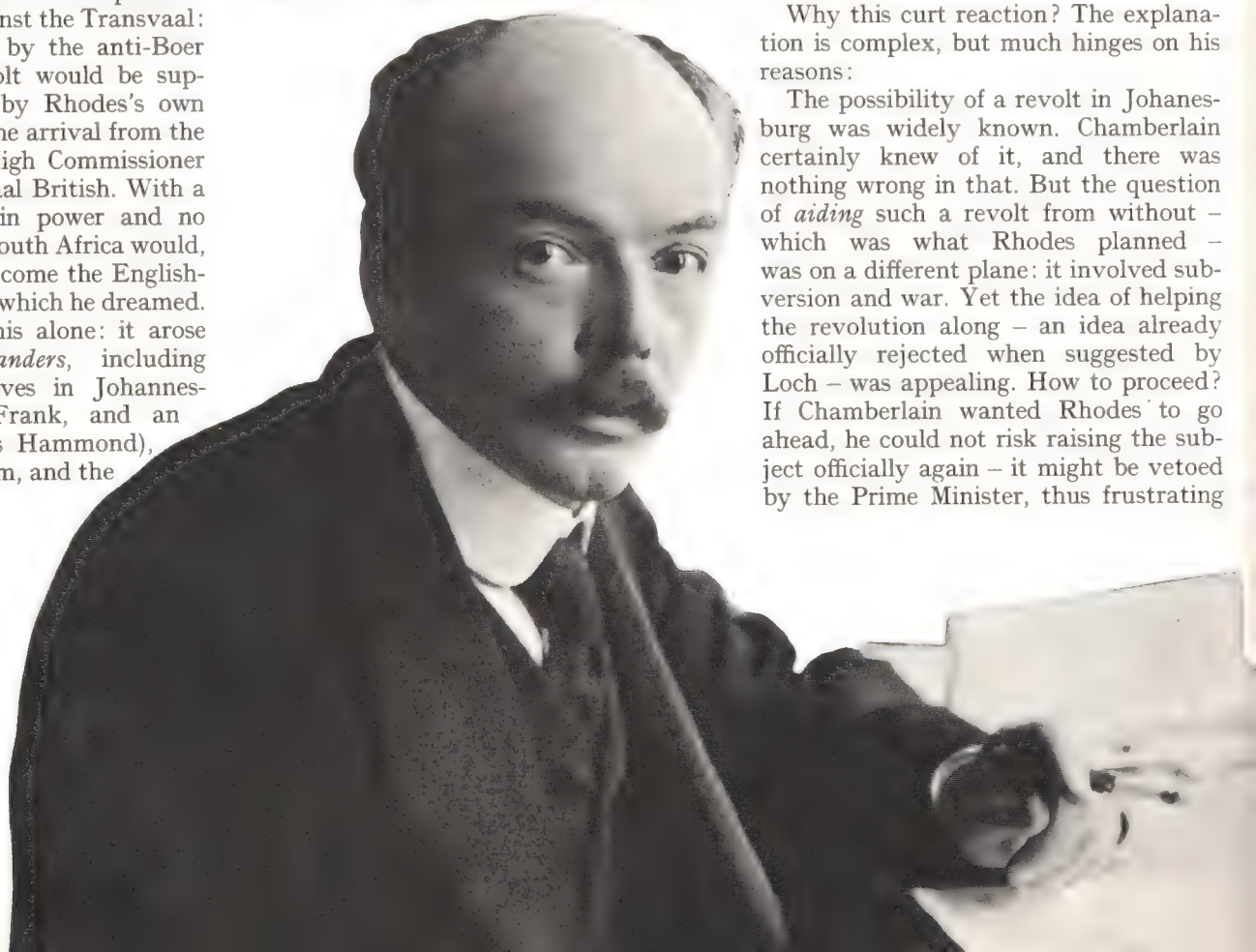
Rhodes determined to demand that London fulfil the tentative promise, made after the founding of Rhodesia, to hand over the Bechuanaland Protectorate to his Company. Beside wanting it for his railway north to Rhodesia, he now needed it as a jumping-off place to help the Johannesburg revolutionaries.

In July, 1895, he dispatched an agent, Rutherfoord Harris, to Chamberlain with the curt instructions: "I want you to get it – the Protectorate. All of it! Get it!" Chamberlain, however, could not do such a thing outright: the British South Africa Company had been assailed for its behaviour against the Matabele and there were three Bechuanaland chiefs then visiting London at their own expense to make sure their lands did not go the way of Lobengula's.

Chamberlain told this to Harris at their first interview. Harris, in an attempt to involve Chamberlain more closely, began to broach the subject of the planned invasion: "I could tell you something in confidence. . . ." Chamberlain cut him off: "I don't want to hear any confidential information. . . . I can only hear information of which I can make official use."

Why this curt reaction? The explanation is complex, but much hinges on his reasons:

The possibility of a revolt in Johanesburg was widely known. Chamberlain certainly knew of it, and there was nothing wrong in that. But the question of *aiding* such a revolt from without – which was what Rhodes planned – was on a different plane: it involved subversion and war. Yet the idea of helping the revolution along – an idea already officially rejected when suggested by Loch – was appealing. How to proceed? If Chamberlain wanted Rhodes to go ahead, he could not risk raising the subject officially again – it might be vetoed by the Prime Minister, thus frustrating



his ambitions. And he certainly could not risk an accusation that he had official knowledge of Rhodes's proposed intervention from without: whatever the outcome, he would have participated in his official capacity in an act of war of which the government as a whole would have been ignorant. It would be the end of his political career.

But by cutting Harris off, by refusing to accept information "officially" then or in any other interview, he still allowed himself the freedom to offer surreptitious encouragement to Rhodes's plans for intervention, principally through Harris himself and Flora Shaw.

The question of Chamberlain's involvement in the plot has taxed historians a good deal. His own explanation afterwards that he had no "official" knowledge of the proposed intervention seems horribly specious: indeed, several of the telegrams by which Harris retailed Chamberlain's views to Rhodes apparently revealed Chamberlain's "private" knowledge of the invasion so clearly that they were never made public.

But the whole question of imperial involvement did not stop there. The co-operation of the new High Commissioner in the Cape, Sir Hercules Robinson, was essential to the plot. He was to step in after the revolt and the invasion to declare imperial authority over the Transvaal. Sir Hercules, 71, dropsy-ridden, did not have Chamberlain's astute awareness of the dangers involved: as Rhodes later said, he "told him everything," though Sir Hercules, seeing his mistake too late, denied knowing anything of the plot for the rest of his life.

From this point on, events gathered momentum. In November, 1895, Chamberlain, with the agreement of the Bechuanaland chieftains, granted Rhodes a thin strip of land along the Transvaal border for the supposed purpose of guarding the Rhodesian railway, now up as far as Mafeking, from the depredations of local tribesmen.

Immediately the concession was made, Jameson arrived from Rhodesia at a fly-blown scattering of huts and tents called Pitsani, to take command of Company troops based there and at Mafeking, 28 miles away.

Jameson then went to Johannesburg and obtained from the *uitlander* leaders a letter begging for help. It was planned that he should produce it later, after the invasion, as a justification for his action. "Thousands of unarmed men, women and children will be at the mercy of well armed Boers," it cried, and in the event of a conflict "we cannot but believe that you . . . will not fail to come to the rescue." This letter, known as the "women and children letter," was to play a vital part in the story of the next few weeks.

In Johannesburg, tension rose to fever-pitch. Alarmist rumours of coming strife drove a mass of fearful non-combatants out of town. Khaki uniforms and rifles appeared in the streets. Keen cyclists formed a Women and Children Protection Brigade. There was a run on food.

"Never before was there so open a conspiracy," wrote one newcomer, "the visitor had hardly installed himself in an hotel before people began to tell him that an insurrection was imminent . . . little else was talked of, not in dark corners, but at the club where everybody lunches." The rumours of impending violence, the wild talk of 20,000 rifles being smuggled in and hidden, were certainly enough to convince Rhodes in Cape Town, Jameson at Pitsani and officials in Whitehall that events were coming to a head.

Kruger, in Pretoria, also thought violence was on the way but he was confident he would win. "I am often asked about the threatened rising," he said ominously, "and I say, 'Wait until the time comes!' Take the tortoise; if you want to kill it, you must wait until it puts its head out."

Actually the *uitlander* threat was shallower than even Kruger could have guessed. Behind the wild talk, there was no real revolution brewing. Few were really willing to follow the leadership of the National Union. What interest would German, French, Belgian, Greek, Portuguese, Italian, Austrian or Hungarian *uitlanders* have in being ruled by the British rather than by the Boers?

Even among the British, both workers and capitalists had too much at stake, were earning too much to risk losing it all by revolution. As one of the *uitlander* leaders said frankly, most people "did not care a fig about the vote." Nor would there be much support from the big "randlords," for they would never subject themselves either to an imperial government, which would tax them even higher, or to their chief rival, Rhodes.

As Saturday, December 28, 1895, the date fixed for the rising, approached everyone was ready for revolt – except the people supposed to start it. Chamberlain, too, was all for it, spurred on by a new crisis elsewhere: on the 18th, he received an ultimatum from America's President Grover Cleveland, on the subject of the British Guiana–Venezuelan border. He hoped to avoid having to deal with two crises at once and wrote to a colleague that the revolution should be fomented "at once or be postponed for a year or two at least." (Chamberlain later claimed that he had no specific knowledge of the plot, and that he was only referring to the possible *uitlander* crisis in the Transvaal.) When this was passed to Rhodes, as Chamberlain intended it should be, the message seemed to Rhodes loud and clear – "Chamberlain is hurrying me up." He flashed a message to Johannesburg in the half-code in which the conspirators couched most of their communications: "Our foreign supporters urge immediate flotation."

The *uitlanders* stalled. Frank Rhodes nervously argued that much could still be won without violence and announced: "The polo tournament here postponed for one week or it would clash with race week." Jameson, writhing with impatience at Pitsani, loosed a despairing, ungrammatical cry at Rhodes: "Do you consider races is of supreme importance?" Rhodes, fearful of giving Kruger time to discover all, could only comment back to his brother "Delay dangerous," and confirm the date of the rising.

But the Johannesburg contingent wanted reassurance. What were Rhodes's plans after the uprising? Would the High Commissioner *really* come at once to negotiate with Kruger? Were they to set up a republic or a colony?

On Boxing Day, with two days to go, Jameson received a cable from his brother Sam: "Absolutely necessary to postpone flotation . . . you must not move . . . too awful, very sorry." And on the day of the rising itself, two *uitlanders* arrived to see

continued on p. 1368

**Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, Rhodes's diminutive but delightful henchman, was guided by his hero's piratical advice: "Act first. Ask questions later."**

When Jameson's men cut the border telegraph lines, they left a branch line intact, thus enabling local Boer farmers to inform Paul Kruger at Pretoria of the invasion as soon as it started.

The charge of Jameson's men at Krugersdorp, seen here as a romantic, smoothly organized gesture by heroes facing overwhelming odds, was in fact a scrappy, amateurish affair.

## A World-Shaking Fiasco

For a decade after the discovery of gold in Johannesburg, the miners' resentment towards intolerant Boer rule grew. Some, spurred on by Rhodes, dreamed of a rebellion to be assisted by Rhodes's agent, Jameson. In 1895, Jameson stationed himself with a body of troops on the Transvaal border, ready to assist when the revolt simmering in Johannesburg broke out. As it happened, Rhodes had misjudged Johannesburg's revolutionary spirit. There was no rebellion – but the impatient Jameson decided to ride in and start one, certain that his act of war would win wide approval.

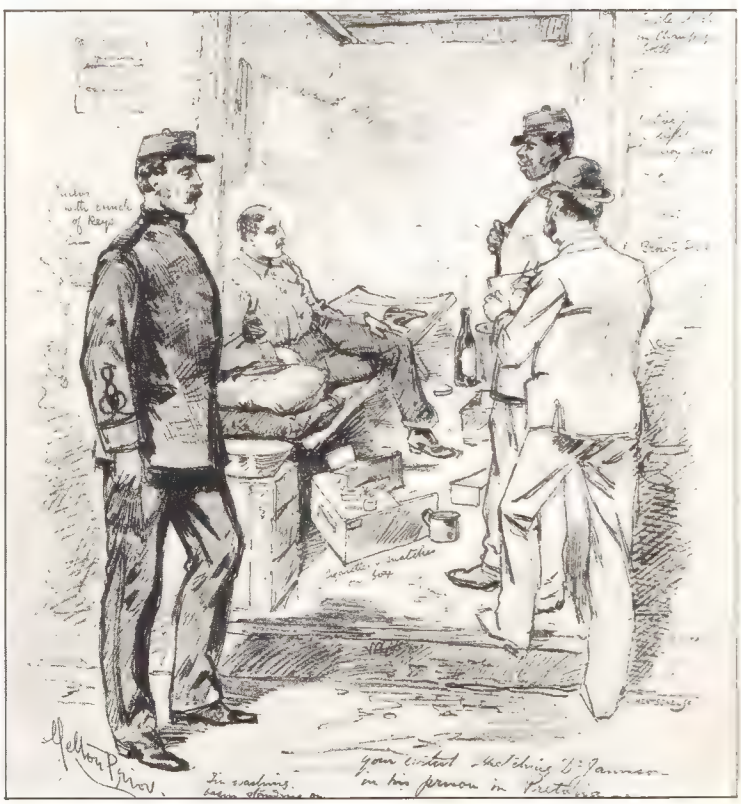
In fact, the raid was a terrible fiasco. There were no stores, no fresh horses, no support from within Johannesburg and positive rejection by the imperial government. And almost immediately – due to a bungled attempt to cut telegraph lines from the border – Kruger, the Boer leader, knew of the invasion at once. Reputedly quoting the 69th Psalm – "Let thy wrathful anger take hold of them" – he ordered out his commandos.

At Krugersdorp, just 30 miles short of Johannesburg, the Boers prepared an ambush. A melodramatic charge by the raiders on the well-ensconced, sharpshooting Boers led only to the death or injury of some 30 of Jameson's men. Jameson, seeking to escape the enemy, ran into a second ambush, this time an inescapable one in a ravine. Running up a white apron borrowed from an old Hottentot woman, the raiders surrendered. A day later, while Boer police swooped on the would-be revolutionaries in Johannesburg, Jameson and the other invaders were marched into Pretoria Jail, singing, with forced gaiety, "After the ball is over."

A petty event in itself, the raid had momentous effects. It rallied Boer opinion solidly against the British and was a direct cause of the Boer War. It led the Kaiser, in a momentous telegram to Kruger, to declare himself for the Boers and against Britain, and thus contributed to the tensions that led to the First World War. No wonder Churchill wrote later "I date the beginning of these violent times from the Jameson Raid."

After their surrender, the exhausted, dejected

raiders wait while exhilarated Boers sweep up to transport them to jail.



Jameson reclines in prison, posing for a sketch.

**John Hays Hammond, a U.S. mining engineer who received an annual salary of $75,000 from Rhodes, stands outside a Johannesburg hotel with Boer police. He was arrested for planning the revolt that was to have given Jameson his excuse to invade.**

Rhodes with the news that many in Johannesburg felt it was actually morally wrong to seize the country. Rhodes had to confess miserably that it had all "fizzled out like a damp squib" – but he failed to tell Jameson so.

The Doctor himself was not to be so easily stopped. He knew that a revolution was waiting to be born: if nothing was to happen of its own accord, then he would have to induce it. "Unless I hear to the contrary," he cabled Johannesburg, "I shall leave tomorrow evening." Just as on the day of the great *indaba* at Victoria, he once again held the fate of a country in the palm of his hand and he seized his opportunity. But this time there was no justification – no treaty to enforce, not even a revolt to support. This was to be a private act of war.

The *uitlander* leaders were panic-stricken. This madman was clearly set on involving them in the very violence that they had now decided to avoid. The wires hummed with pleading messages and one of Jameson's old friends from Matabeleland, Major Maurice Heany, was even sent out to Pitsani to stop him. He repeated to Jameson the reasons for delay – the lack of arms, the lack of unified leadership, the lack of firm political purpose. Jameson "rather laughed," walked up and down in deep thought for 20 minutes and then announced "I'm going." "Thought you would," said Heany placidly. "What are you going to do?" asked Jameson. "Go in with you." "Thought you would."

On the 29th, Jameson summoned his men, read them the "women and children letter," and broke the news that they were riding in the name of the Queen – a blatant untruth – to rescue their countryfolk. He did not tell them that the letter was weeks old and that its contents had been contradicted many times in the last few days.

Early on the morning of Monday, December 30, Jameson joined the second column from Mafeking and crossed the border. The advance towards Johannesburg 180 miles away was a series of disasters and disappointments. The riders dispatched by Jameson to cut the telegraph wires leading away from the border overlooked one sub-station, with the result that the invasion was known almost at once to Kruger in Pretoria; he immediately ordered Boer commandos to mobilize.

Carefully watched by lone Boer outriders, Jameson met trouble the first evening. Stores and fresh horses had been placed along the route over the previous few months but the invaders had not given themselves enough time to saddle them up, eat and sleep. The men mostly chose to sleep before moving on, and by the second day were hungry and riding exhausted horses.

Meanwhile, the effects of Jameson's action had spread outwards in waves that gathered momentum as they went. The *uitlanders* in Johannesburg had received the news of the invasion in a cryptic telegram from Cape Town: "The Veterinary Surgeon has left for Johannesburg with some very good horse-flesh." Vacillating between extremes of hope and fear

***R. is Rhodes with beating heart***
***Jim's upset his apple-cart!***
**ran the caption to this cartoon, done for an A.B.C. of political subjects. The second line was taken from Rhodes's own words when he heard of the pathetic end of Jameson's invasion.**

– everyone feared the coming of the Boer commandos – nervous crowds gathered and dispersed in front of the Goldfields Building, where the *uitlander* leaders received messages from dispatch-riders who galloped in at breakneck speed.

In the first few hectic hours, a Reform Committee, in effect a provisional government, was established by 64 of the *uitlanders*; Kruger, in a surprisingly far-sighted act designed to avoid provocation, withdrew the Boer police. It worked. The Reformers, set on keeping the peace, never even removed the Transvaal flag from the Goldfields Building. The flag was actually flying upside down, probably by mistake, not, as some onlookers imagined, as a symbol of revolution.

In Cape Town, Rhodes was shattered. "I will resign tomorrow. It means war. I am a ruined man." he moaned. But he made no effort to stop Jameson, apparently thinking it was too late. And hoping against hope that Jameson might succeed in taking over the Transvaal, he cabled the "women and children letter" to *The Times*, inserting a current date on the top of it.

In London, Chamberlain was equally horrified. However much he had been involved in the conspiracy, he could never have predicted that Jameson would go in without the excuse of an *uitlander* revolt. He could not condone an act of war, for even if Jameson did win through, his part in it would be clear and he too would be ruined. If he kept silent he was ruined anyway. He had no real choice: he at once repudiated the action.

To many in Great Britain, Jameson was a hero and Chamberlain a cad. *The Times* in an editorial admitted the invasion was "technically incorrect" but added forcefully that "technicalities could not have been allowed to stand in the way where the lives and property of thousands" was at stake – a view that received dramatic support with the publication of the "women and children letter." Cartoons and poems praised him. The poet laureate, Alfred Austen, produced a piece of interminable doggerel that ran in part:

*There are girls in the gold-reef city,*
*There are women and children too,*
*And they cry: "Hurry up! For pity!"*
*So what can a brave man do?*

On New Year's Day Jameson received a cable from Sir Hercules Robinson: "Your action has been repudiated. You are ordered to retire at once." Jameson did not retire.

At Krugersdorp, a few miles short of Johannesburg, the Boer general, Piet Cronje, had prepared a perfect ambush. At the top of an incline Jameson and his men came face to face with Boer sharpshooters. A hopeless assault led to the loss of 30 of Jameson's men dead or wounded.

After a night of despair, with no sleep and only muddy water to drink, Jameson tried to outflank his enemy. He was stopped almost immediately and lost more men. There was nothing for it but surrender. The Boers had lost just four dead – one of them shot accidentally by his own men. On the evening of January 2, 1896, the raiders trooped into Pretoria Jail.

The Boers were jubilant. Not only were the raiders captured; the Johannesburg *uitlanders*, too, were cowed and their leaders arrested. Altogether, 250 of the Boers' enemies were under lock and key.

It really looked like the end of British influence in the Transvaal. This was an event of tremendous significance, for the first country that could take Britain's place would have the most valuable prize in all Africa. One person in particular – the German Kaiser – was desperate to extend his African Empire. He was all for declaring a protectorate over the Transvaal, until his Chancellor pointed out that this would mean war with England. In the end he contented himself by sending a historic telegram to Kruger. "My sincere congratulations," he said, "that, without calling on the aid of friendly powers, you and your people . . . have succeeded in defending the independence of your country."

The telegram was a revelation to the British. The Kaiser was Victoria's grandson and was supposed to be friendly; now he suddenly appeared as Britain's enemy. A small-scale border raid in southern Africa had thus revealed the great power rivalries that were to be a major cause of the First World War.

After this, Kruger's treatment of the raiders was top news. Jameson and his four military commanders were extradited for trial in England. The others were tried in Pretoria. Four of the *uitlander* leaders – Lionel Phillips, George Farrar, Frank Rhodes and John Hays Hammond – were sentenced to death and the others to two years' imprisonment and £2,000 fines.

The British in the Cape were outraged. Protests poured into Kruger's office. This gave Kruger a superb opportunity to indulge in diplomatic clemency – "magnanimity by inches" as the Press called it. Indeed he may even have felt a certain sympathy for the *uitlanders*, for since the raid Johannesburg had been quiet. In addition, a disaster had occurred in Pretoria just before the trial. A train carrying 55 tons of dynamite had been left standing in the midday sun and had exploded with such force that buildings up to a mile away were flattened. At once, the Johannesburg capitalists – even Rhodes's Consolidated Gold Fields – subscribed tens of thousands of pounds to help in restoration. "Blessed are the merciful," Kruger said, "for they shall obtain mercy."

Within 24 hours, he commuted the death sentences. In May, the Boer Executive Council gave the four ringleaders 15 years and the rest were advised to petition for leniency.

Many of the Reformers' supporters made pathetic appeals to Kruger about conditions in the jail in an attempt to help their friends, appeals which were apparently justified when one of the prisoners committed suicide.

Telegrams continued to pour into Kruger's office, and his clemency proved boundless. At the end of May, most of the Reformers were released on payment of their fines, and in June the four remaining leaders, too, were given their freedom in exchange for £25,000 fines. Two *uitlanders* refused to pay. They were released a year later as a tribute to Victoria on her Diamond Jubilee.

Thus, for the raiders and for the *uitlanders*, the immediate effects of the raid were soon over. But the wider implications were only just beginning to emerge. There was Jameson's trial to come. There was an inquiry due which had been promised by Chamberlain, totally unaware of the degree to which Harris's telegrams to Rhodes might implicate him in Jameson's act of war. And the whole question of British policy towards the Transvaal – and of imperial control in South Africa – was bound to be thrown wide open.

At the raiders' trial, Jameson and his colleagues were charged with preparing "a military expedition against a friendly state," the first and only time such a charge has been brought in a British court. Determined not to involve the imperial government further, Jameson said little and seemed to his many admirers a stoical figure.

Then, and in the subsequent inquiry, Jameson spoke with praiseworthy honesty. He had not, he confessed, done "a proper thing." But he added with equal truth: "I know perfectly well that if I had succeeded, I should have been forgiven." His feelings of guilt were perfectly genuine: he returned later to politics in the Cape and as Prime Minister there between 1904 and 1908 he devoted himself to "getting square" – to restoring relations between Boer and British, a task that won him a knighthood.

His comparative silence at his trial was not, however, simply stoicism and remorse: it was the result of deep depression and illness. He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment – the rest got a few months – but he was released after four months on grounds of ill health.

After the trial came the inquiry promised by Chamberlain. At first, it seemed likely to destroy Chamberlain, Rhodes and perhaps the government itself. Rhodes, who had at once resigned as Prime Minister of the Cape, feared that Chamberlain would also remove the British South Africa Company's charter, the basis of his power in Rhodesia. He turned to blackmail: hands off the charter, he warned Chamberlain, or Harris's telegrams would be released to reveal that the Colonial Office had been closely involved in the planning of the raid.

"I don't care a twopenny damn for the whole lot of them," said Chamberlain with bravado, "but if they put me with my back against the wall they'll see some splinters." The issue was drawn: Rhodes and Chamberlain each had the power to ruin the other, but silence from both would ensure the survival of both.

Then, at the end of 1896, the crusading imperialist journalist, W. T. Stead, in an

**A sly Kruger, with Jameson and his raiders safely pocketed, uses the pro-Boer Kaiser to checkmate Chamberlain's imperialist ambitions, represented on the board by Rhodes, the diamond King.**

**This cartoon slates the inquiry into the Jameson Raid. Colonial Secretary Chamberlain, though potentially implicated in the Raid, also ran the hearing. Here, he exonerates Rhodes – though both hold keys to the fiasco.**

attempt to laugh off the raid, wrote a light-hearted account of the events leading up to it. Entitled *The History of the Mystery* its frontispiece showed Jameson as a skeleton in the cupboard, captioned: "Not such a bad skeleton after all." Stead also mentioned the unpublished telegrams in order to dismiss their importance, but far from taking the heat off Chamberlain he accomplished exactly the opposite. At the last moment, official censorship was imposed and the article appeared with ominous oblongs of blacked-out type. What was the government trying to hush up?

The Committee of Inquiry began its work in January, 1897. It was the hottest event of the day, being watched by the Prince of Wales himself. But from the first the inquiry was a farcical anti-climax; the Committee had no legal power to compel evidence to be given, and on the 15-man board sat Chamberlain himself – the very person who was meant to be under suspicion. In addition, it was Jubilee year; no one really wanted to recall the shadier side of Empire at a time when its glories were all the rage.

Rhodes, over from Africa to defend what remained of his honour, at once showed that he was not going to spill the beans about the government's role in his plotting. In return, he was sure, Chamberlain would make no move against his Company. He was asked if he had told Sir Hercules Robinson what he was planning; Rhodes had only to say: "Yes, I did tell him," and the fact of official complicity would be out. Instead Rhodes clumsily dodged: "I think you should get the answer from the High Commissioner." Robinson's own written statement was then produced.

Naturally it contained no references to Rhodes's real intentions. "I do not like to say anything," Rhodes commented, stating that he did not wish to involve "third parties" not present. His ploy was readily accepted – it could after all be seen as good, old-fashioned loyalty. After six days of unproductive grilling he was allowed to return to Africa.

As the hearings went on, two incidents in particular revealed the hollowness of the proceedings. One of Jameson's lieutenants, Johnny Willoughby, who was imprisoned with him, had written to the War Office of his belief that the raid would have official support. Nothing, however, would make Willoughby reveal how he came by this opinion. As a board member justly remarked, the Committee had been revealed as "a humbug."

Then some of the Harris telegrams were produced. These made clear that there were others that Rhodes's lawyer, Bouchier Hawksley, was deliberately holding back. Hawksley said they were confidential and could not be produced without Rhodes's permission. But Rhodes was safe in Africa and made no reply. The telegrams remained concealed.

To cap it all, Flora Shaw, go-between for Rhodes and Chamberlain, ran circles round the Committee. Her telegrams to Rhodes were produced – 10 of them, with liberal references to Chamberlain. Miss Shaw, elegant and brilliant, denied any complicity. Compromising instructions from Rhodes – "Inform Chamberlain," "Make Chamberlain instruct High Commissioner" – she said she had not obeyed. The Committee, gentlemen one and all, trusted her implicitly.

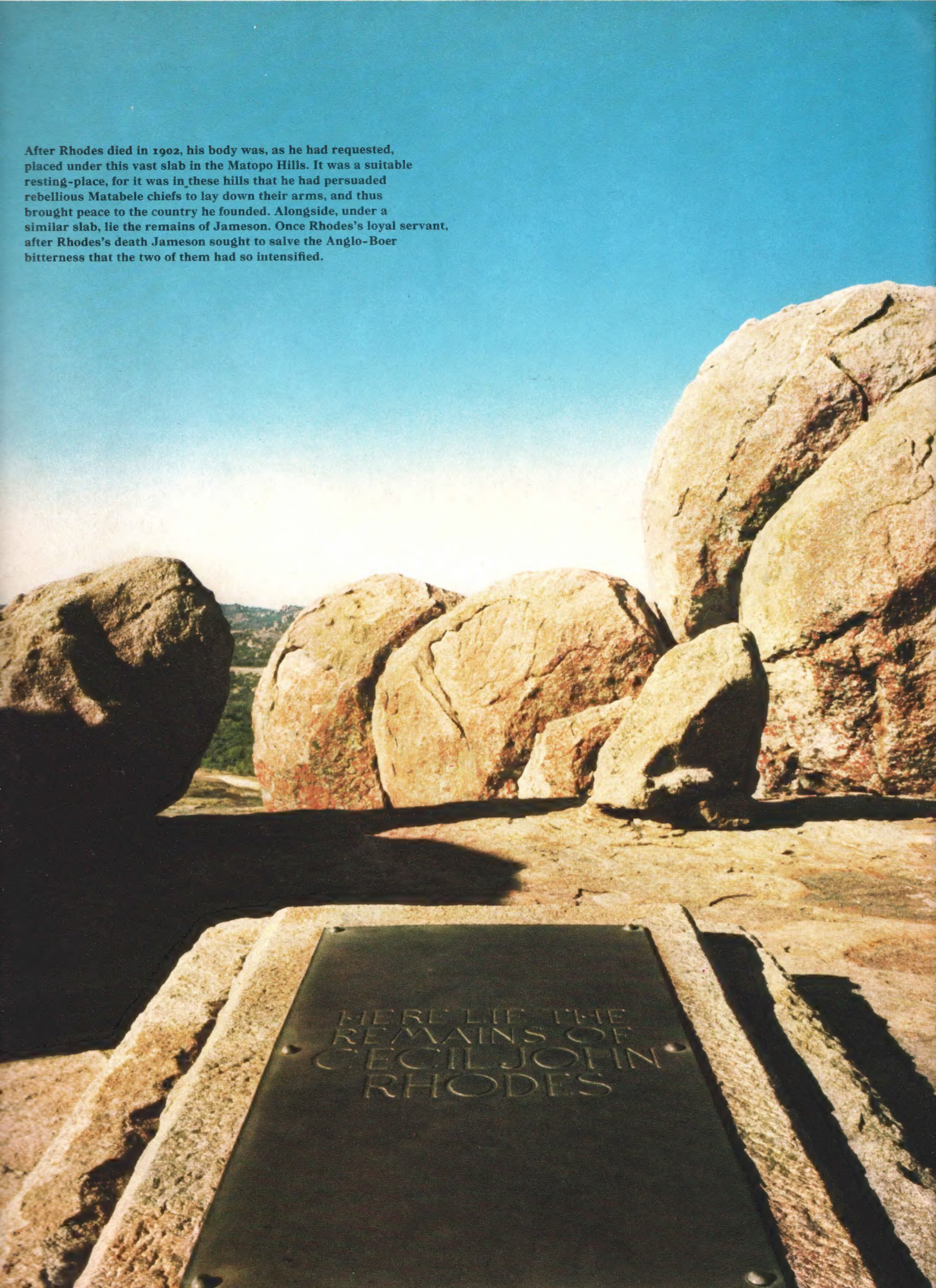
After this, it was no surprise that when the Committee – caustically nicknamed "the Lying-in-State at Westminster" by one journalist – produced their report, it blamed Rhodes for the whole thing and exonerated both Sir Hercules Robinson and Chamberlain.

But no one in authority had any illusions. The struggle for power between Boer and British had been irreversibly intensified. The Boers in the Orange Free State and the Cape as well as in the Transvaal were now convinced that British policy was directed to the destruction of their nation. The leaders of the raid – who could well have been hanged in the Transvaal for their action – had got off nearly scot-free. Incriminating evidence had been suppressed to protect the Colonial Office. Sir Hercules Robinson himself had confessed to a leading Cape Afrikaner: "I fear Pushful Joe is in it."

There was only one way for the British to ensure superiority in the Cape: by forcing Kruger to make concessions to the *uitlanders*. Indeed Kruger was prepared to do so – if Britain left the Transvaal utterly free to manage her external as well as internal affairs.

This was precisely what Chamberlain was working to avoid. Few wanted war, but there seemed to be no alternative to "working up a crisis," in the words of Robinson's aggressive successor as High Commissioner, Alfred Milner.

Eventually his views were accepted. Within two years, the government had turned the might of the Empire against Kruger's ragged guerrilla farmers.




**After Rhodes died in 1902, his body was, as he had requested, placed under this vast slab in the Matopo Hills. It was a suitable resting-place, for it was in these hills that he had persuaded rebellious Matabele chiefs to lay down their arms, and thus brought peace to the country he founded. Alongside, under a similar slab, lie the remains of Jameson. Once Rhodes's loyal servant, after Rhodes's death Jameson sought to salve the Anglo-Boer bitterness that the two of them had so intensified.**

*9th Lancers, 1820*